COMIC SHOP NEWS™

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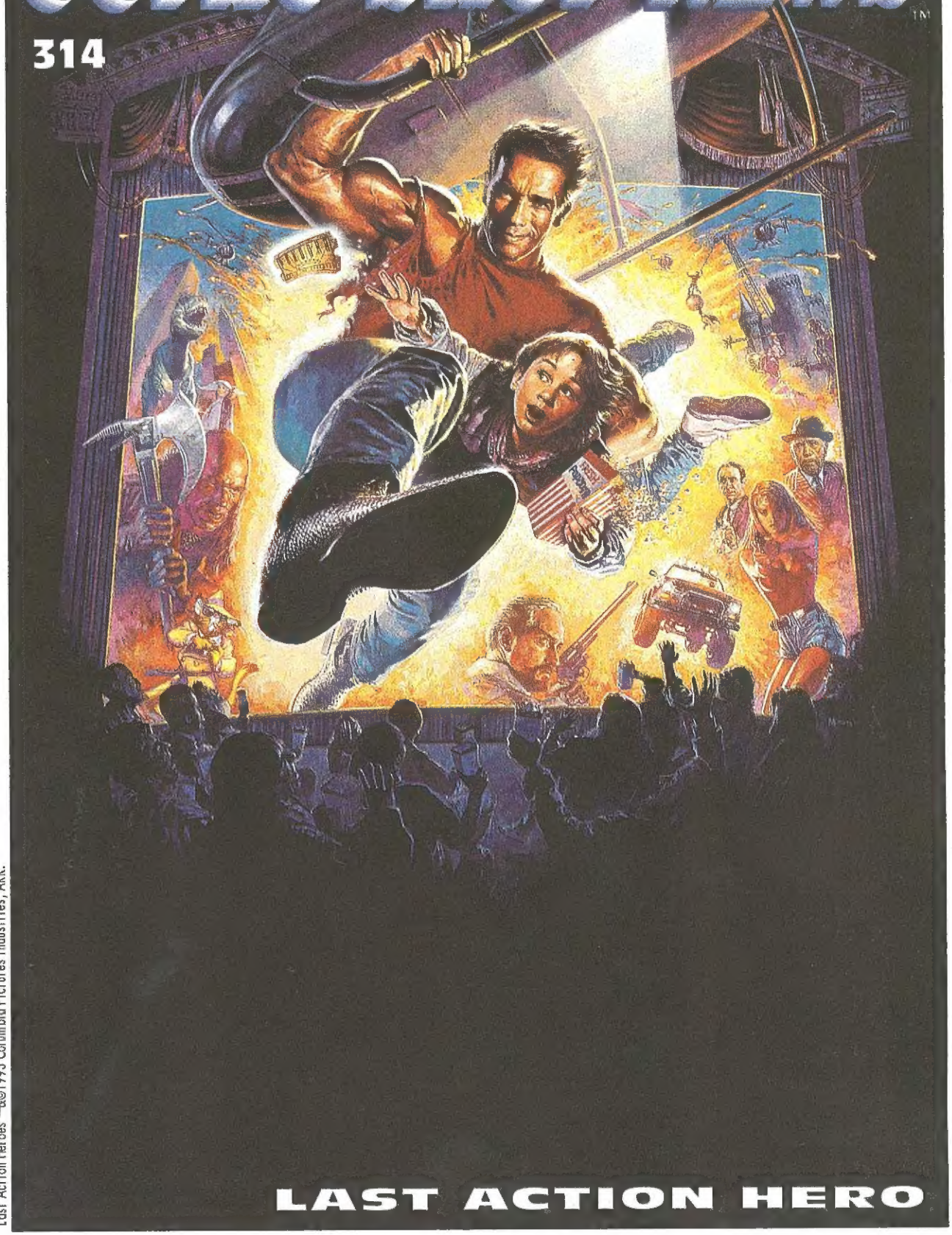

Last Action Heroes ™&©1993 Columbia Pictures Industries, ARR.

Last Action Hero Breaks the Fourth Wall—Both Ways!

Remember ***The Purple Rose of Cairo,*** a classic Woody Allen film in which a character from the silver screen stepped out into the real world to find out why a woman kept watching his movies? Well, in the upcoming Arnold Schwarzenegger film ***The Last Action Hero,*** the miracle works both ways!

Danny Madigan is a young, introverted boy whose life is pretty unexciting; in fact, it's at times virtually unpleasant. Danny seeks escape in the darkened auditorium of a movie theater, where he enjoys watching the exploits of his favorite hero, Jack Slater. Once Danny comes across a movie ticket once owned by Houdini, however, some really unusual movie magic takes place—and Danny finds himself inside the movie screen, where he becomes Jack Slater's sidekick!

Before too long, though, things get turned around and Jack Slater finds himself outside of his movie world and in the middle of our reality. He's not the only one to escape from cinematic reality, though; he's followed by his most dangerous villains. And life is much less predictable here than inside the screen; when Jack Slater fires a gun at a car, it doesn't

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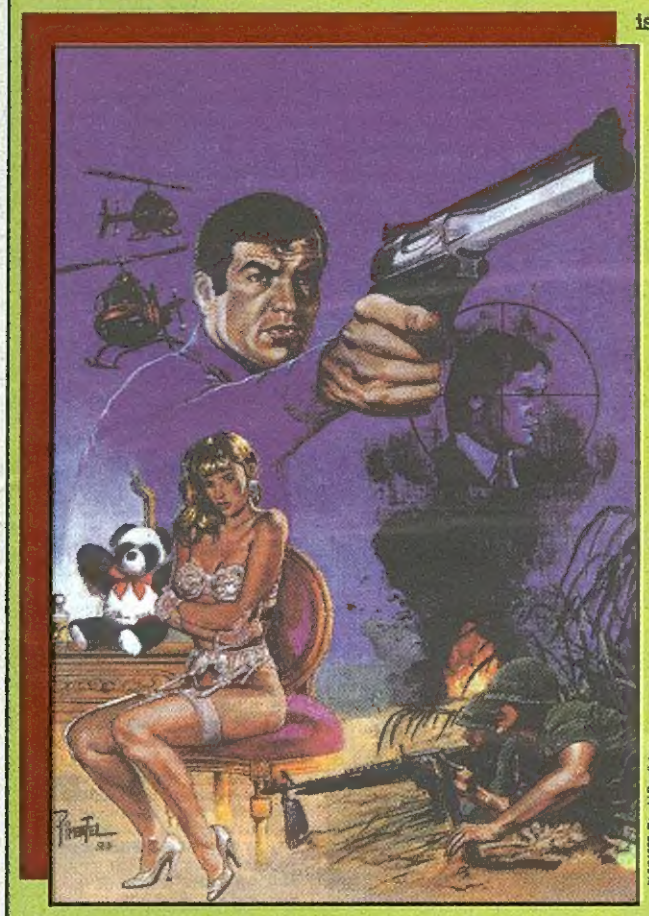
explode; villains don't leave clues at every turn; and Jack Slater's heroic actions prove very painful, both for his adversaries and for him.

Even worse, the actor who plays Jack Slater on screen—some guy named Arnold Schwarzenegger—is targeted by the enemies who confuse him with Jack Slater. The only hope for Arnold's survival is... Danny Madigan?...

The Last Action Hero, a new Columbia Pictures film set for June release, is sure to be one of the summer's biggest blockbusters. Topps Comics, already known in film circles for their superb adaptation of ***Bram Stoker's Dracula,*** is bringing this strange merger between the "reel" and the "real" to comics beginning in June. ***The Last Action Hero,*** a three-issue limited series written by Stefan Petrucha and illustrated by Jerome Moore, tells the story of the film in the same high-quality format Topps utilized for its ***Dracula*** adaptation. The series will be released in two different formats: a standard edition priced at $2.50 per issue, and a deluxe collectors edition, polybagged with three exclusive trading cards, priced at $2.95 per issue. One thing's fore sure, though: you'll get more than your fair share of excitement in whichever version you pick up!

by Kim B. Pearson

Innovation's Bolan 'Em Over With Executioner



™ &©1993 Donald Pendleton

He was a good man... a moral man. He had a strong respect for law and order. then his family was gunned down by organized crime, and his life veered in a new direction. He turned his skills to crimefighting, becoming one of the most heavily-armed vigilante soldiers who ever gunned down gangsters, hoodlums, drugrunners, and dons.

The Punisher? No— the Executioner.

Mack Bolan, the Executioner, is the archetypal vigilante crime-fighting hero; his earliest exploits predate the first appearance of the Punisher by years, and many have speculated that Don Pendleton's grim and gritty hero actually served at least partially as a model for Frank Castle. Like the Punisher, he has become incredibly popular—in fact, his popularity actually surpasses the publisher, having generated sales of over five hundred million copies of over two hundred different titles in two different series. Even today, The Executioner is the best-selling action-adventure hero on the paperback racks.

And, beginning this summer, Innovation Comics is confident that that paperback success can translate to comic book success when ***The Executioner*** becomes a new monthly comic book series. Not only has Innovation secured the license to bring the Executioner to comics, but they've also secured the involvement of the talent responsible for the creation of ***The Executioner:*** Don Pendleton, who will be writing the Innovation comics series.

"It's not a hoax, it's not a 'ghost writer,' it's not an imaginary story: Don Pendleton himself is writing the comic book!" George Broderick, Jr., said. "Creator Don Pendleton wrote the first thirty-eight books and created a whole new sub-genre of action fiction... Now Don Pendleton returns to write the Innovation comic book!"

Innovation's series will begin with Don and Linda Pendleton's adaptation of the Executioner's origin story, "War Against the Mafia." This story certainly has much in common with the Punisher's origin—but it also features significant differences, and is even harder-hitting than the comic book hero it inspired.

Mack Bolan: The Executioner is illustrated by Sandu Florea and Mike Deodato, Sr.; Joe Jusko has designed the first issue's cover. "Innovation has assembled some of the finest artists in the business," Don Pendleton said, "so it is a special delight to be associated with these superbly talented people. This has been a tremendously satisfying growth experience—besides which, it has been great fun!"

Innovation is releasing ***Mack Bolan: The Executioner #1*** in three different formats. The first version, priced at $2.95, will offer a cardstock cover, a gold-and-red foil embossed logo and crosshairs, and a cover painting by Joe Jusko and Hector Gomez.

The second variation, a $3.50 comic, will feature, appropriately enough, an almost-bulletproof cover. "Although we couldn't quite line up bullet-proof Kevlar... the cover art, a variation of Joe Jusko's design as painted by José Pimentel, is printed on Kimdura/Tyvek, making it almost impossible to rip and tear. The cover logo is printed in metallic inks to really stand out," editor George Broderick said.

The third version, a $3.95 comic, is a special double-covered edition. The top cover, printed on a special textured black paper, features a bloody X (from ***The Executioner*** logo) in red foil. The inner cover, featuring the Joe Jusko-Hector Gomez painting, will feature special color inks for the logo and the crosshairs.

Every version o***f Mack Bolan: The Executioner*** will feature the same exciting origin story installment written by Don Pendleton. Furthermore, it appears that Pendleton will be involved with the monthly series for quite some time to come, if his enthusiasm for the project is any indication. "If someone had suggested to me a few months ago that I would soon be head-and-shoulders into a comic book project, I would have laughed and gone on to more serious business.

"The truth is that I was abysmally ignorant of the medium and had no knowledgeable respect for it.... I have not only developed a respect for the process, but a downright love for it. This is a very high art form..."

Mack Bolan: The Executioner #1 is scheduled for July release.

by Kim B. Pearson

Down the Line...

That long-rumored Batman-Spawn crossover is a definite go for '94—look for one Batman-Spawn book with art by Klaus Janson from DC and one Spawn-Batman book from Todd McFarlane... Look for Valiant to add a ***Ninjak*** title later this year... ***Marvel Masterpieces II*** are coming in late '93, as are DC Master Series cards (both from Skybox, of course)... Clive Barker has more Razorline/Barkerverse books in the works... Heartbreaker Hobbies has signed an agreement to produce pewter figures of Image characters... Hot new crossover: Nexus and Magnus by Baron and Rude!... Barry Windsor-Smith has signed on to produce an Ultraverse book for Malibu... An ongoing ***Simpsons*** comic? Could be... Forget the Robin miniseries—he's graduating to his own series very soon now... Neil Gaiman is writing a new miniseries, ***Children's Crusade,*** for DC... ***Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*** is sure to wow anyone who's ever enjoyed a Superman story—clever writing, fast pacing, good effects for teevee, and a strong respect for the source material; look for it this fall, Sundays at 8 on ABC... ***Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*** comes to comics courtesy of DC... Marvels, a stunner of a series from Kurt Busiek and Alex Ross, is a look at the Marvel Universe through the eyes of an all-too-human news photographer who feels pretty much like we'd feel if we were dropped into the Marvel Universe; it'll knock your socks off later this year... What's this about Space Ghost returning in '94?... Jim Lawson and Bob Burden have a Turtles-Carrot crossover ready for the fall... Valiant has a new 3-D process that'll amaze everyone; look for it in late '93... Larry Niven's ***Ringworld*** becomes a comic book miniseries courtesy of DC... Spider-Man joins the Fox lineup in the fall with 65 episodes in the initial contract... Doc Savage alert: Graphitti has a stunner of a statue coming up in the near future... A sequel to Batman/Dracula: Red Rain is in the works... Mike Baron will be turning out new Badger madness for Dark Horse pretty soon...

by Cliff Biggers

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COMIC SHOP NEWS™

6 • 29 • 93

From Your Friendly Neighborhood Comics Outlet

Printed on 100% Recycled Newsprint

PLASM™

In a universe parallel to our own, time was running out....With everything on PLASM biogenetically engineered, new biomass—plasm—was continually needed to feed and sustain the Empire. Yet all resources were exhausted: There were no "worlds" left to conquer, no more prisoners to fling into the brutal maw of the mulch gullets.

Until the discovery of Earth.

There it lay...a globe of inestimable beauty—and possibility—across a nanosecond-thin reality veil. And it was populated with vast numbers of living, breathing beings—perfect fodder for the voracious Org.

Ten thousand oblivious earthlings were slated for capture and transported to the alien Empire. But the experiment went awry, and the survivors—a mere five out of 10,000—escaped...*only to find that a fate even more astonishing awaited them....*

PLASM #1—the spellbinding first title from DEFIANT—ships the first week in August and debuts with a riveting 4-part mini-series within the series. Don't miss out: Only a nanosecond-thin reality veil separates you from an adventure *Beyond the Imaginary Limits*!™

Glory™ (aka Louise Johnson), Heroine of the Revolution

DEFIANT

You ll Get a Charge Out Of This...

Electro, one of Spidey's oldest adversaries, makes far fewer showings that his venerable status might lead you to expect. In a world of multi-powerful heroes and villains who command all sorts of energy sources, it's easy to forget just how dangerous a master of electricity could be. Electro's determined to re mind everyone of his capabilities in ***Spider-Man #38,*** though... because he's planned his most magnificent crime ever. Just what does he have in mind? Only writer *J.M. DeMatteis* and artist *Klaus Janson* know, and they aren't saying. You can find out on July 22nd, though, when this eye-catching book ships. In case you've forgotten, Janson (along with *Frank Miller*) was a part of the art team that revitalized ***Daredevil*** a little over a decade ago; since then, he's gone on to illustrate a number of books for both DC and Marvel. His interpretation of Spider-Man is one that Spidey fans and Janson fans won't want to miss!

Necroscope Is Far From Dead

Malibu Comics' adaptation of *Brian Lumley's* first ***Necroscope*** novel has been so well received that the company has contracted with Lumley to continue the series after the first novel adaptation is completed with ***Necroscope #6***. Rather than relaunching with ***Necroscope Book II #1***, Malibu will adapt the second book, ***Wamphyri,*** in ***Necroscope #s 6-10.*** In the second novel, the Soviets set out to learn the power of the vampire and harness the vampiric powers for themselves. Brian Lumley is "very excited that another of his novels is going to be adapted into comics," editor *Roland Mann* said. "He reads through the scripts, and helps to point out things that he knows the ***Necroscope*** readers will want to see." The adaptation of ***Wamphyri*** will be written by *Martin Powell* and illustrated by *Dave Kendall,* who is described by Mann as "one of the hot new British artists breaking into comics over here." ***Necroscope #6*** is scheduled for August release.

21st Century Archives Goes Weird

Trina Robbins' ***A Century of Women Cartoonists*** is focusing long-overdue attention on women who have been active in the comics field—but comics aren't the only popular-entertainment field where women have provided to pictures that accompanied the text. In the pulp field, there were several women who illustrated the mystery, suspense, adventure, and horror stories that appeared on the magazine racks week in and week out. None of them was more popular or more respected than *Margaret Brundage,* whose stunning pulp art for Weird Tales ***virtually defined the Weird Tales*** look for more than a decade.

This summer, 21st Century Archives shines a long-overdue spotlight on the art of Margaret Brundage with the release of its first ***Weird Tales Trading Cards*** series. The fifty-five card set features some of Brundage's best-known covers from 1930's issues of Weird Tales. The chase cards feature a selection of "sculpted" cards. *Robert Weinberg,* author and pulp expert, supplies the accompanying text. 21st Century Archives' ***Weird Tales Trading Cards*** are available in eight-card packs priced at $1.50 per pack; look for them in July.

Avengers Assembled

In celebration of the Avengers' 30th Anniversary, Marvel has put together some of the team's most dramatic confrontations in a single 160-page trade paperback. ***Greatest Battles of the Avengers TPB*** reprints ***Avengers Annual #10, Avengers #s 54, 55, 79, 160,*** and ***Avengers Annual #17***; these issues include top-notch work by *Roy Thomas, John Buscema, Chris Claremont, Michael Golden,* and *Jim Starlin; Tom Raney & Gina Going* supplies the new cover illustration. The X-Men, Black Panther, Warlock, the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, Thanos, and others guest-star in this slugfest extravaganza; the first appearance of Rogue is reprinted in this volume, for all you X-Men fans and historians. ***Greatest Battles of the Avengers,*** an August 5th release, is priced at $15.95.

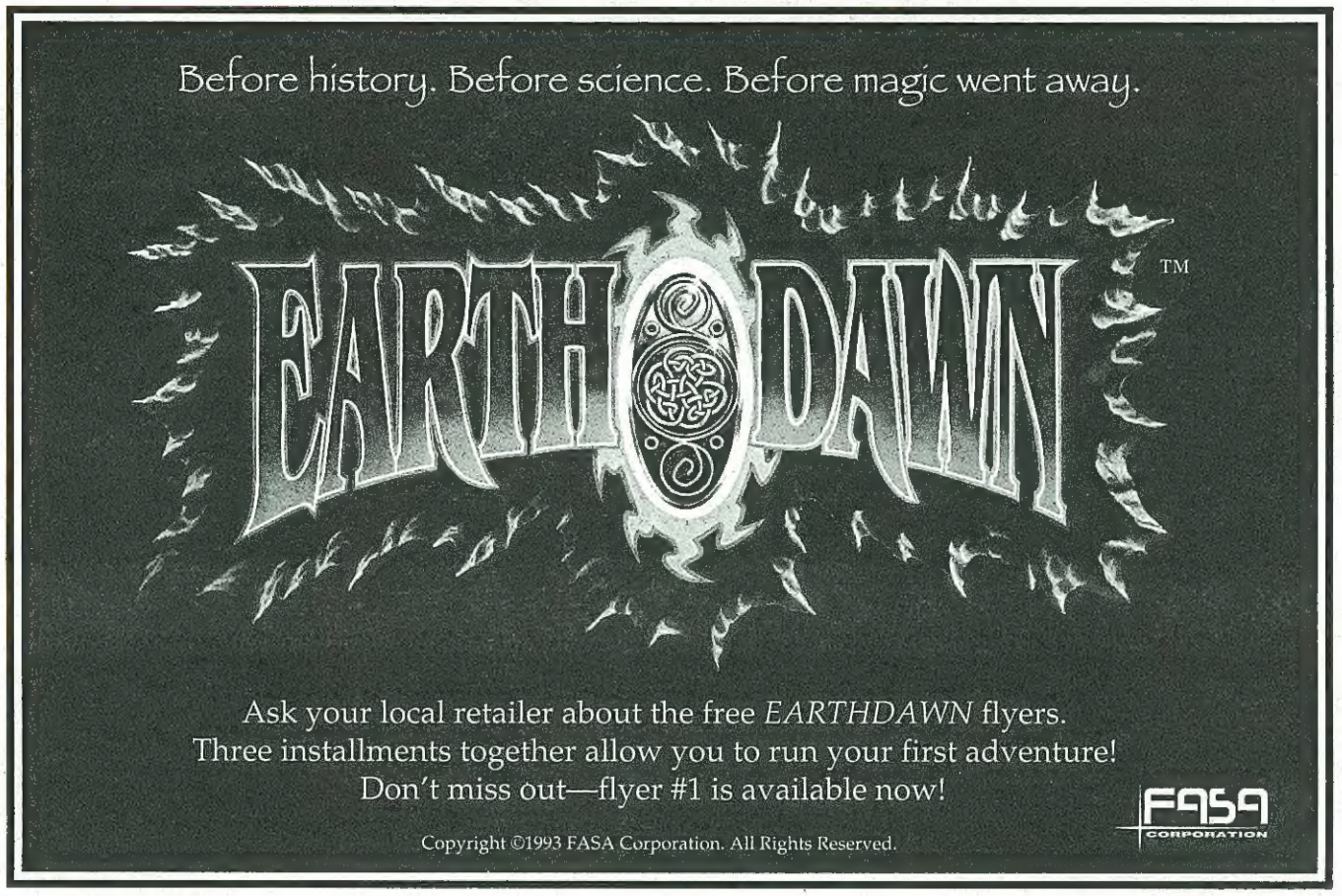
Is the Park Still Open?

By now, everyone knows the premise of ***Jurassic Park***—but what you may not know is that Topps Comics movie adaptation miniseries isn't the end of their foray into Jurassic Park. "***Jurassic Park*** doesn't end here," Topps said in a recent press release. "A few deadly dinosaurs are still on the loose and... well, that would be telling!" We'll all have to wait until September to find out just what it is that Topps has in mind... but rather than merely adapting the film, it sounds like this is one comic that picks up where the movie leaves off!

Of course, Topps' ***Jurassic Park*** movie adaptation is nothing to sneeze at, either; it does combine the talents of Walt Simonson, Gil Kane, and George Perez to produce quite possibly the highest-profile movie adaptation of the year. The first issue of Topps' ***Jurassic Park*** should be on the comic shop racks now; look for the remaining three issues between now and late August.

A Speedy Change In Direction

CSN has already told you that there are some major events slated to occur this June in ***New Titans #100***; here's a clue that'll give you an idea just how sweeping those changes are. In ***New Titans #101***, the team gets a new leader, Arsenal (formerly Speedy), and loses two members as the newlyweds leave the group. A Titans team without Nightwing and Starfire? Apparently so! The superhero line-up isn't the only team change greeting ***New Titans*** fans in this issue; there's also a new artist, *Bill Jaaska,* joining writer *Marv Wolfman* beginning with ***New Titans #101***. Find out more about the changes on July 22nd.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JUNE '93

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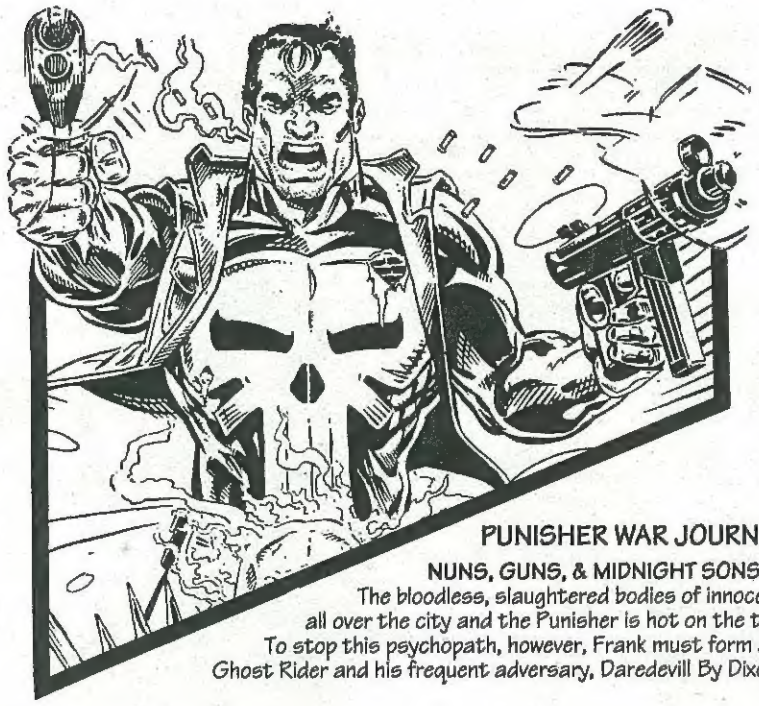

PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #57

NUNS, GUNS, & MIDNIGHT SONS!!!

The bloodless, slaughtered bodies of innocent nuns have been turning up all over the city and the Punisher is hot on the trail of the mysterious killer. To stop this psychopath, however, Frank must form an uneasy alliance with the Ghost Rider and his frequent adversary, Daredevil By Dixon and Kwapisz.

SPIDER-MAN UNLIMITED #2

MAXIMUM CARNAGE - PART 14 of 14!!!

The final chapter of "Maximum Carnage" might also be the final chapter of Spider-Man's life. It's all out war between Spidey, Venom, and Carnage, with the sanity of an entire city hanging in the balance. Written by Tom DeFalco with explosive artwork from Ron Lim, Mark Bagey, Jim Sanders III, and Sam DeLaRosa.

MARVEL COMICS®

GHOST RIDER '93 GHOST RIDER '83

WHAT'S THE CONNECTION?

FIND OUT IN THE ROAD TO VENGEANCE: THE MISSING LINK
A six-part crossover blazing through GHOST RIDER #41-43 and SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE #14-16.

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GHOST RIDER/BLAZE: SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE #13

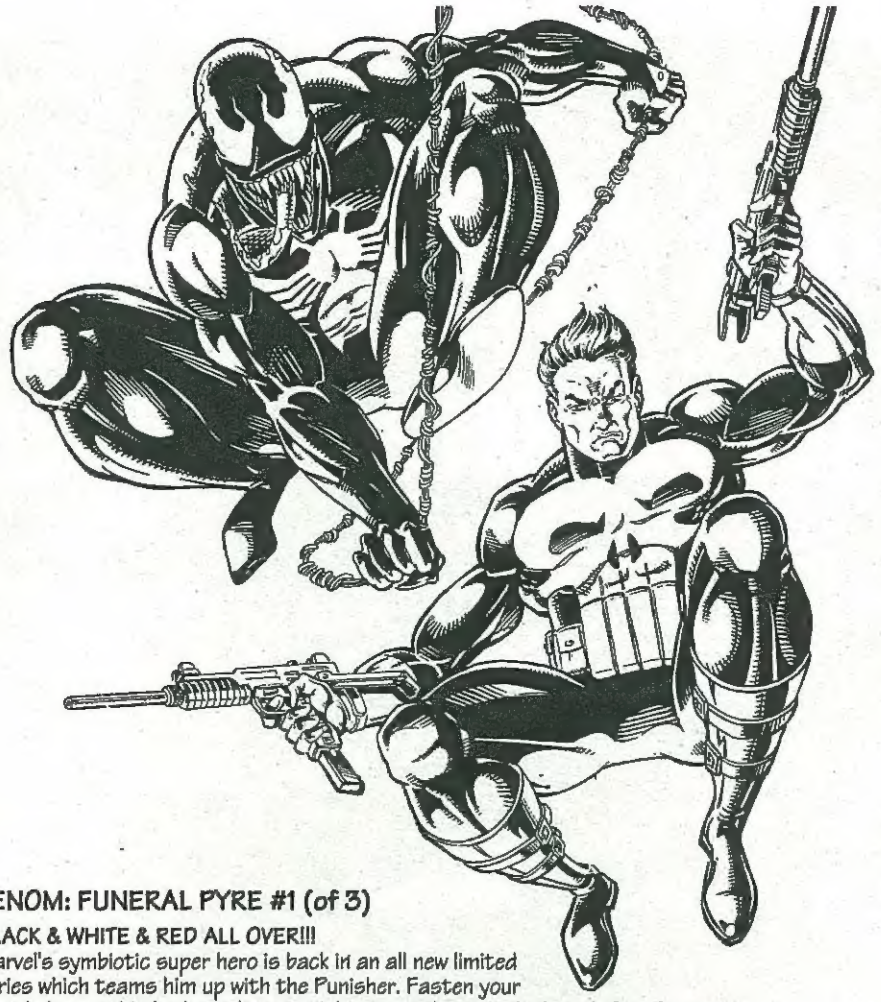
BLADE UNLEASHED!!!

MIDNIGHT MASSACRE - PART 5 of 5! This is it! Blade versus the remaining Midnight Sons! And if the Sons don't find a way to stop the increasingly powerful Blade, they'll end up like their murdered allies. This pivotal issue boasts two covers, including a black parchment "Darkhold envelope" outer cover imprinted with gold metallic ink. By Howard Mackie, Adam Kubert, and Klaus Janson.

SPIDER-MAN: CARNAGE BOOKSHELF COMIC

UNHOLY ORIGINS!

Reprinting the repulsive birth of Carnage and his first vicious battle against Spider-Man and Venom from the now classic AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #361-363. From Michelinie, Bagley, and Emberlin.

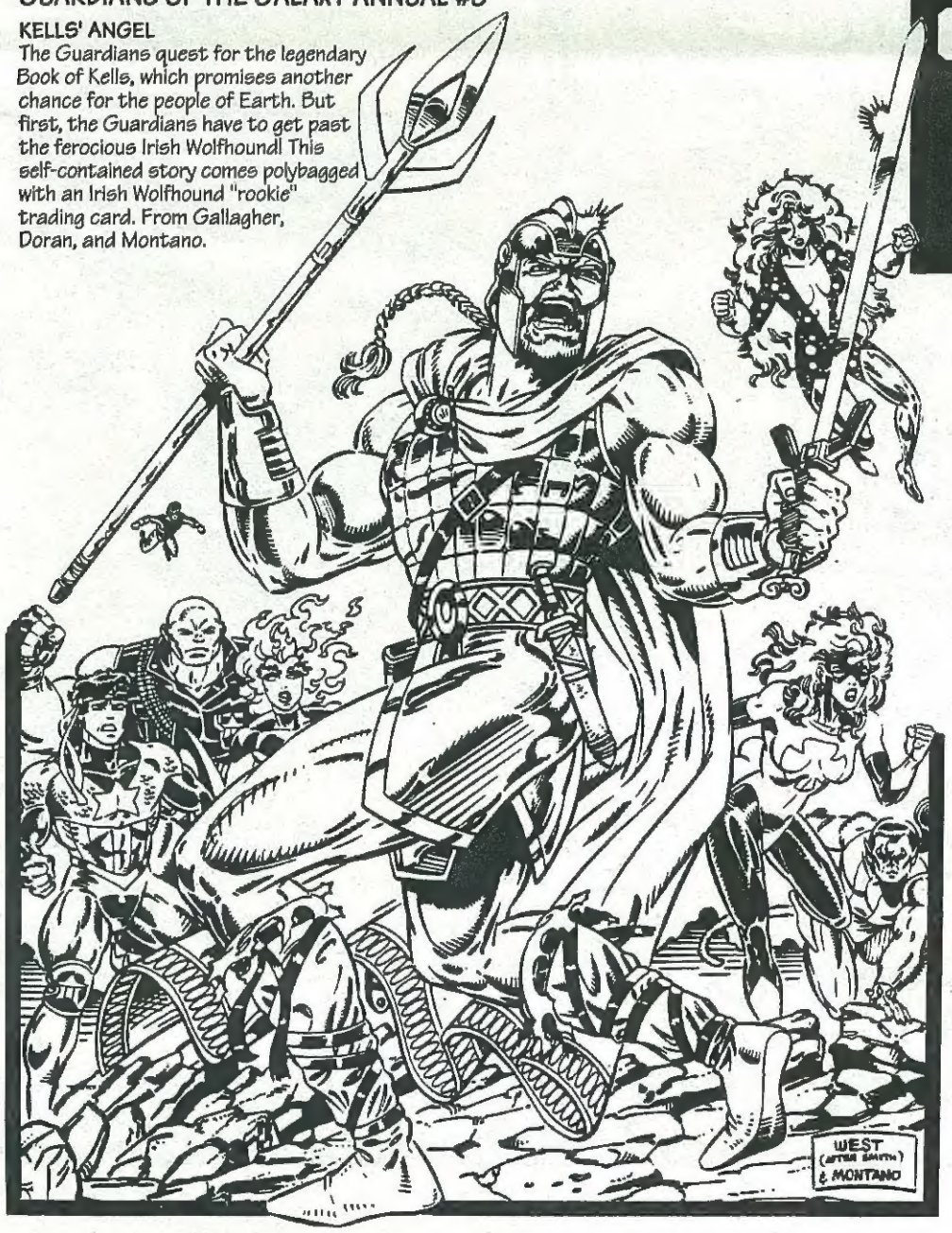


VENOM: FUNERAL PYRE #1 (of 3)

BLACK & WHITE & RED ALL OVER!!!
Marvel's symbiotic super hero is back in an all new limited series which teams him up with the Punisher. Fasten your seat belts as this bad guys' worst nightmare takes on a high tech San Francisco street gang and a brand new villain named Pyre. Printed on high quality stock with a "flaming" holo-grafix foil cover, FUNERAL PYRE is sure to be the greatest vigilante team-up of all time. By Potts, Lyle, and Rubinstein.

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY ANNUAL #3

KELLS' ANGEL
The Guardians quest for the legendary Book of Kells, which promises another chance for the people of Earth. But first, the Guardians have to get past the ferocious Irish Wolfhound! This self-contained story comes polybagged with an Irish Wolfhound "rookie" trading card. From Gallagher, Doran, and Montano.



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CRUSADE CROSSOVERS

The never-ending battle continues in this week's Infinity Crusade crossover titles

CSN CHARTS

TOP 50 COMICS

CSN's Top Seller charts are based on figures supplied by the two major distributors, Diamond Distribution and Capital City Distribution, as well as figures by a cross-section of comics speciality shops. The distributor's figures represent retailer orders placed on the titles, while the information from stores represents copies sold.

1. Deathblow 1
2. Spawn 10
3. Shadowhawk II 1
4. Batman 497
5. Brigade 1
6. Stormwatch 2
7. Youngblood: Battlezone 1
8. Superman 79
9. Superman: Man of Steel 23
10. Adventures of Superman 502
11. Action Comics 688
12. Shaman's Tears 1
13. Tribe 1
14. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter 2
15. Amazing Spider-Man 379
16. Venom 6
17. X-Men 22
18. Batman 496
19. Uncanny X-Men 302
20. 2099 Unlimited 1
21. Wildstar: Sky Zero 2
22.1963 2
23. Cable 2
24. Spider-Man 36
25. Detective 663
26. X-Force 24
27. Web of Spider-Man 102
28. Detective 662
29. Spectacular Spider-Man 202
30. X-O Manowar 19
31. Trencher 1
32. Infinity Crusade 2
33. Superman: Man of Steel Annual 2
34. Bloodshot 7
35. Warlock Chronicles 1
36. Spider-Man 2099 9
37. Batman: Shadow of the Bat Annual 2
38. Rai & the Future Force 12
39. Lobo Annual 1
40. Chain Gang War 1
41. Archer & Armstrong 13
42. Magnus: Robot Fighter 27
43. Sandman 51
44. Eternal Warrior 13
45.Harbinger 20
46. HARD Corps 9
47. Solar, Man of the Atom 24
48. Shadowman 16
49. Ren & Stimpy 8
50. Punisher 2099 6

TOP DOLLAR COMICS

The following comics, graphic novels and trade paperbacks were given Top Dollar ratings based on the dollar volume of the copies sold (or are expected to sell) during the late June and July sales period.

1. Shadowhawk II 1
2. Deathblow 1
3. Spawn 10
4. Brigade 1
5. Stormwatch 2
6. Youngblood: Battlezone
7. Shaman's Tears
8. Tribe 1
9. 2099 Unlimited 1
10. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter 2
11. Venom 6
12. Wildstar: Sky Zero 2
13. Batman 497
14. Cable 2
15. Superman 79
16. Superman: Man of Steel 23
17. Adventures of Superman 502
18. Action Comics 688
19. Punisher & Spider-Man: Designer Genes
20. X-O Manowar 19
21. Infinity Crusade 2
23. Superman: Man of Steel Annual 2
24. 1963 2
25. Warlock Chronicles 1
26. Batman: Shadow of the Bat Annual 2
27. Bloodshot 7
28. Lobo Annual 1
29. Amazing Spider-Man 379
30. Spider-Man 36
31. Chain Gang War 1
32. Archer & Armstrong 13
33. X-Men 22
34. Rai & the Future Force 12
35. Batman 496
36. Trencher 1
37. Cyberspace 3000 1
38. Magnus: Robot Fighter 27
39. Harbinger 20
40. Eternal Warrior 13
41. Deathlok 25
42. Uncanny X-Men 302
43. HARD Corps 9
44. Solar, Man of the Atom 24
45. Sandman 51
46. Detective 663
47. Shadowman 16
48. Stupid 1
49. X-Force 24
50. Ren &Stimpy 8

TOP 10 BLACK & WHITE COMICS

1. Cerebus 170
2. Dark Horse Presents 73
3. Dirty Pair: Sim Hell 1
4. Conan Saga 75
5. Robotech: Return to Macross
6. Macross II 9
7. Savage Sword of Conan 211
8. Venus Wars II 12
9. Caravan Kidd Part II 1
10. Ranma 1/2 Part II 5

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TOP TEN NON-COMICS

The Top Ten Non-Comics is based on number and not dollar value. This category includes graphic novels, hardcovers, trade paperbacks, portfolios, etc. It includes books that actually were on sale during the June sales period.

1. Batman Animated Series Trading Cards
2. Star Wars Trading Cards
3. Wizard 23
4.. Comics Values Monthly 83
5. . Batman: Sword of Azrael TPB
6. Star Wars: Dark Empire TPB
7. Savage Dragon TPB
8. Sandman: Game of You HC
9. Cerebus: Flight TPB
10. Comic Relief 52

Everything's Looking Vine For Black Orchid

If you find yourself strangely obsessed with the concept of a new ***Black Orchid*** comic book, don't think it too odd; after all, it might be the Black Orchid's doing. What with her power to control the minds of those who are near her, making them do what she wants while they think all the while that they're acting of their own volition, she's a super-being whose potential is limited only by the abilities of those she controls. It should be no surprise, then, that there are evil forces out there who would like to gain control of the Black Orchid—and through that control, they would be able to manipulate anyone to their own ends.

Black Orchid, a new ongoing series in the DC Vertigo imprint, picks up where the *Neil Gaiman-Dave McKean* miniseries left off several years ago. Dick Foreman (who has written for ***Swamp Thing*** and ***Hellblazer***) and Jill Thompson (illustrator of the "Brief Lives" story arc in ***Sandman)*** chronicle the struggles of the plant/human hybrid as she tries to determine her own role in the DC Universe.

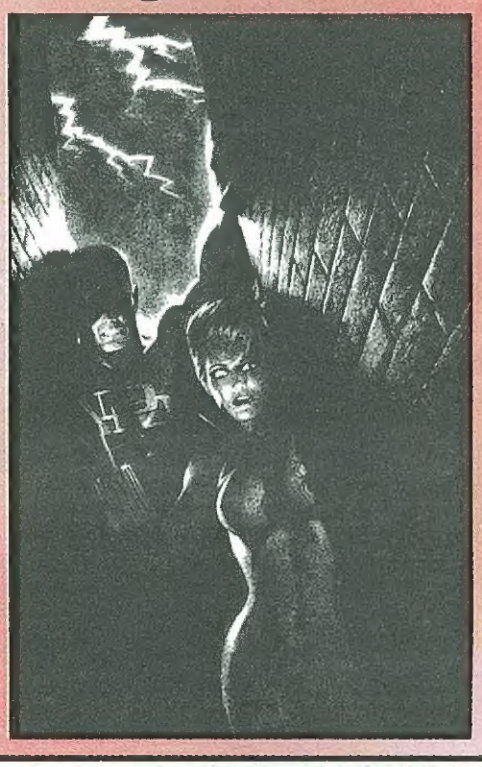
The series begins when reporter Walt Maddocks begins investigating the Black Orchid; his search reveals that there are other, more ominous people who'd also like to learn all about her. Logos, a dealer in information who is tied in with the criminal world, wants to learn how to control Black Orchid. Meanwhile, Black Orchid has problems that have nothing to do with organized crime: she is losing her powers due to prolonged contact with the corrupting forces of the human world. ***Black Orchid #1,*** a $1.95 comic intended for mature readers, is scheduled for July 15th release.

DC is also offering a ***Black Orchid Poster*** painted by series artist *Jill Thompson;* this $4.95 poster should be in comic shops on July 22nd.

by Kim B. Pearson

DD & Black Widow Having Second Thoughts?...

It's difficult enough to battle criminals when they have no idea what you're up to; as Daredevil and Black Widow soon discover, though, it's even more difficult when the criminals in question can read your every thought and know what you intend to do as soon as you develop the plan. That's the problem that DD & Black Widow face in the graphic novel ***Abattoir.*** Their targets are psychopathic telepaths who have been murdering latent telepaths throughout the city; since they can read Daredevil and Black Widow's minds, they always stay one step ahead of the heroes who hope to bring them to justice. The graphic novel is written by *Jim Starlin* and illustrated by *Joe Chiodo*; Chiodo's stunning paintings have been highlighted on various Marvel posters, including the Black Widow poster, but this fully painted graphic novel is the first for the popular artist. ***Daredevil & Black Widow: Abattoir,*** a $14.95 64-page graphic novel, is scheduled for July 15th release.



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DEATHMATE™

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VALERIA THE SHE BAT™

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THE DEADLIEST OF THE SPECIES

PREDATOR™

CHILDREN OF THE VOYAGER™

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#1 COMING ATTRACTIONS FOR JULY

COMIC SHOP NEWS

Jim Shooter

by Cliff Biggers

Jim Shooter is one of the best-known figures in comics today. His career spans four different decades: he began writing for DC's ***Legion of Super-Heroes*** *in the 60's, he returned to comics to become Marvel's editor in the 70's, he took the company to a position of industry dominance in the 80's, and after an absence he returned to form a new company ,Valiant, in the early 90's. Now, less than a year after his departure from Valiant, Jim Shooter is forming his own company, Defiant Comics—the first company he's been involved with that is truly and entirely his. With Defiant's first title,* ***Plasm,*** *due out in August (and with the* ***Plasm Zero Trading Card*** *series on the stands at about the same time as you read this), Jim Shooter is obviously a very busy man—but he took time from his schedule to talk with* **CSN** *about Defiant, the comics industry, and his creative philosophy.*

What is the focus of Defiant Comics?

I've often said that everything I've done before is sort of a rough draft leading up to Defiant; I think the goal of the company is to become a major force in the industry. I think this industry needs leadership; I feel like I'm at the point in my life—and the people who are with me are at the point in their lives—where they've been through a lot and they've seen it done wrong a lot. We're pretty sure we know how to do it right, and we feel that the time is right. I'm the same age that Stan was when he started Marvel. I think you have to go through a long learning curve to get to the point where you're ready to start something that will, with luck, grow and prosper like Marvel did. That's where we are, and that's our mission with Defiant.

The three principles of the company are as follows. We are first and foremost ready friendly. This includes putting story first, because we are storytellers and entertainers. It also includes having that kind of rapport with the readers that Marvel had in the early 60's, when we all felt that Marvel was our own personal club. Why did we feel that way? Because Marvel did things like answer letters; they couldn't answer all of them, but I got my little blue post card in the mail from Flo Steinberg. We intend to treat people with respect; when we see people at conventions, we'll listen to them. Defiant will treat submissions with respect as well. Care about the readers and realize that they are our collaborators—that's very important to me.

Comics are the most collaborative medium in the world. If you go see a movie and you don't particularly like it and you'd like to give Spielberg a piece of your mind, good luck... You're not going to get past his bodyguards, he won't read your letters... But if you don't like one of our comics, you catch me at the next convention and walk up to me and tell me what you think, and I will listen! We all do: everyone in this business does, even the most aloof and arrogant creators in this business. They can't help but be influenced by the murmurs of the crowd; we're all too much together, and we all come from the same root stock—when you trace it all back, we're all fans. The fans, the retailers, the publishers, the distributors, the artists, the writers, the editors—everybody, they're all fans. Basically, this is a bunch of people who have a unique relationship with this medium and each other. Defiant is going to acknowledge that and honor it; we believe in it, and that's part of our reader-friendly principle.

Our second principle is that we're creator-friendly. I've been on the other side of the desk for many years; I've also been at a big company like Marvel, fighting upstream to make things better from the inside the same way that someone like Neal Adams is working to make things better from the outside. I succeeded; I made a lot of things at Marvel better than they were. It was originally work-for-hire for pennies; the systems I put in place made guys like Todd McFarlane millionaires. We got halfway home, but I never finished the job at Marvel; the company was being bought and sold, and all progress came to a standstill during those years. Now I have a pretty fair idea of how it should be done, and we're doing it. We're going to be the most creator-friendly, fair, and honorable publisher in the business.

I had a long talk with Mike Richardson [publisher of Dark Horse]; he's another guy I think has pretty high principles along those lines. I think what he's done for the guys who work with him is very nice, and I think that what we're going to d is also going to be very good. We're doing a comic universe first, and then later on we're going to do creator-owned stuff; he did it the other way, with creator-owned stuff first and now they're creating a comic universe. We're going to learn from each other; we're very good friends. We're going to be state-of-the-art or better.

The last principle is that we're going to be cutting-edge. Everywhere I've been, I've tried to not do what everybody else was doing—to do the next thing instead. I want to keep trying to come up with stuff that will make a lasting impression. And it's not only me—I try to get everybody thinking that way... try to make that part of what they call the corporate culture. Everybody feels like we shouldn't be looking around and saying, "Hey, they're doing trick covers; let's go do a trick cover." Instead, we want to find a way to do it better, or do it differently, or take the next step beyond that.

An example is our zero issue trading card set; I've had people say, "Oh, well, there've been things like that before... I thought of that years ago." As far as I know, though, no one else ever did it. We're not going to be content with that, though; I think that, in the next year, you're going to see lots of people doing comics formed from card sets, but we're going to be on to something else by then. We'll always stay one step ahead.

That's the three principles of the company. As for where we're going—I said it in a general way when I said we want to be a major force. I think there's an enormous shake-up going on in this business. I think that, by a year from August, some of the dust will have settled—that's a year after the first issue of our first title will have shipped. By August of 1994 this industry will be far different from what it is now. The Big Two won't be the Big Two any more; I think we will be entrenched as a leader and have a pretty hefty market share. I think that some of the other newcomers will also fare well—and I think that some of the others will fall away. I think we have the right ingredients to emerge from this where we want to be.

Who else is involved in Defiant?

I keep saying "we," and I should clarify that. I said that it's a bunch of people who've been around for a while... as I look around here, I see that it's really true. I've got Chris Claremont working for us—there's a guy who's been through some wars. I have Mike Barr, Steve Ditko—who has more horror stories than anybody... Ditko's doing gorgeous stuff for us. We have him working twice up—that's the old size—and what he's doing looks just great. We also found some inkers who are really compatible with him, so it has all of the good foundation that Ditko can lay for you, but it has a good quality finish that a guy like Steve Leialoha can add. We have another guy, Fred Butler, working with Steve, and it looks really great. We have a lot of veterans with a lot of collective experience—some good and some bad. The bad things teach you if you're strong, though...

Alan Weiss, who's doing a book for us, has been around forever and he's one of the real greats, but he doesn't have the body of work that a Starlin or somebody does because he's really picky. He only does things he's really into. I ran into him in Denver and he said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm starting a comic book company." He said that we ought to talk sometime. I said, "Let's talk now; who don't you come help me build a universe." He looked at me like I was from space—but then he showed up here and said "Okay, what do I have to do?" I said that I didn't want any dilettantes; I wanted him to

show up at the meetings and contribute ideas and help us build this thing and we'd pay him—and he said okay! For the first time in history, Alan Weiss is doing a monthly book!

Another ancient hand who's emerged recently to do a oneshot for me—and it'll be fun to work with him again—is Len Wein, who's doing a sixty-four page Plasm Special that'll be coming out around Thanksgiving. So we've got a whole bunch of stuff in the works—and there are a few more, but that's getting pretty far down the road, and it's getting past the point where I know what order they're coming out in.

What comes after Plasm?

Plasm is our first title, but we have about ten books in development right now. After ***Plasm*** launches, the second launch is a title called ***Dark Dominion***—it's by me, Steve Ditko, and Steve Leialoha. It's interesting stuff, set in New York—everything except ***Plasm*** is real world, in fact. It launches in October.

The next title, which starts in November, is ***The Good Guys.*** It's a young superhero group book—I've been doing young superhero group books since 1965, so I guess we'll keep doing it until we get it right. That one's being written by Mike Barr and is being drawn by Fred Butler.

The next book after that is a title called ***War Dancer.*** It's being written and pencilled by Alan Weiss; we're still fussing over who's going to ink that. Alan has some real definite ideas about how he wants it to look, so we're more or less interviewing candidates. Alan is a terrific draftsman, and he wants to make sure that he has someone who can fit it all in—the lighting, the texture, the modelling that he likes.

The next one is called ***Charlemagne***—and it's not a historical drama. It's set here and now; the character is given his name by a French-speaking Vietnamese—his name is Charles, of course. That's going to be coming out early next year; it'll be written by Deborah Purcell, who is our executive editor here, and drawn by David Klein, a really hot artist who's been doing some work for DC—mostly on ***Eclipso***—and it's beautiful stuff.

The next one is coming out early next year, but now the dates are getting fuzzier. It's called ***Prudence and Caution***; it's a male-female buddy book by Chris Claremont. The artist is still in negotiation, but it's going to be a hot book. Chris is great; he has another series in the works for us—it's in the conceptual stages now, so we don't have a name for it, but he'll be doing another series. The great thing about Chris is that we worked together for so long that he sort of understands from me the nature of the universe and then he can create within that framework beautifully. Chris—and Mike Barr, for that matter—are veterans who like working in the context of a team; they like having an orchestra around them so that they can play their first violin and still build something bigger than they could do on their own.

We have another book with the working title of ***Glory;*** there's another book out there called ***Glory,*** so we may have to rename that, but the working title is ***Glory.*** David Lapham is writing and pencilling that one. We have one called ***Dogs of War,*** but I don't know who the creative team is on that one yet.

I've also heard word that Roger Stern is going to be doing a monthly book with us. He's finishing a huge commitment he had with DC to do a novelization of the ***Death of Superman*** storyline. I've always been kind of afraid to just point-blank ask him, but the last time we talked I just hinted around a little bit and he expressed an inclination... We left it that way, because I didn't want to push it. Then I ran into a friend of his who walked up to me at the Capital City show and said, "Hey, I hear that Roger's writing a series for you!" I ask who told him that, and he said that Roger did—so I guess that's a pretty good source. It's really a matter of if he can free himself up.

One thing I want to mention is that we're not going to do this endless proliferation that happens sometimes in comics; we plan to take this to a level that is sort of as big as we can be and still be good. We're talking twelve or fourteen titles—maybe sixteen—but no more than we can do and still keep that real tight continuity and really close coordination. I still want to get everybody who works for us together in a room every month and make sure that the grand plan is unfolding in a logical and consistent fashion.

We just had one of those meetings a little while ago and had everyone here; we flew Mike Barr in from California, and we got Chris in—and it's sometimes harder to get Chris in than it is to fly guys in from California—and Steve Ditko and David Lapham... the whole crew. We had this raucous round table discussion about the universe and all that's in it; I don't think you can have more fun than that. I think we'll offer as a prize some day that someone will get to come to one of these meetings; there's nothing more fun than sitting around with a bunch of really bright creative people and winging it, creating universes.

I understand that Plasm is the core of the Defiant Universe; is that correct?

The theory with ***Plasm*** is—well, think of ***Plasm*** as being ***Unity,*** only instead of waiting a year to do it, I'm doing it from the very beginning. A lot of things take place initially in ***Plasm*** and then are brought back to the here and now, the real world, and they become factors in real life. In the first year of Defiant, people will see the relationship unfold so that people can see what Plasm really is and why there is a Plasm, how it got there, and what their relationship really is and how it fits with the logical and scientific basis of the whole universe. I'm known for doing here-and-now real-time continuity; I think when people knew there was going to be a Defiant but before they knew what was going to be coming out, if you had asked a hundred people, most of them would have said "Their first book will be something like ***Harbinger."*** That's one of the reasons I wanted to do something that was more incredibly visual, outrageous, extra-dimension, science-fictional... I think that's the last thing that a lot of people expected. Also, if you have a David Lapham, you've got to turn him loose and let him go.

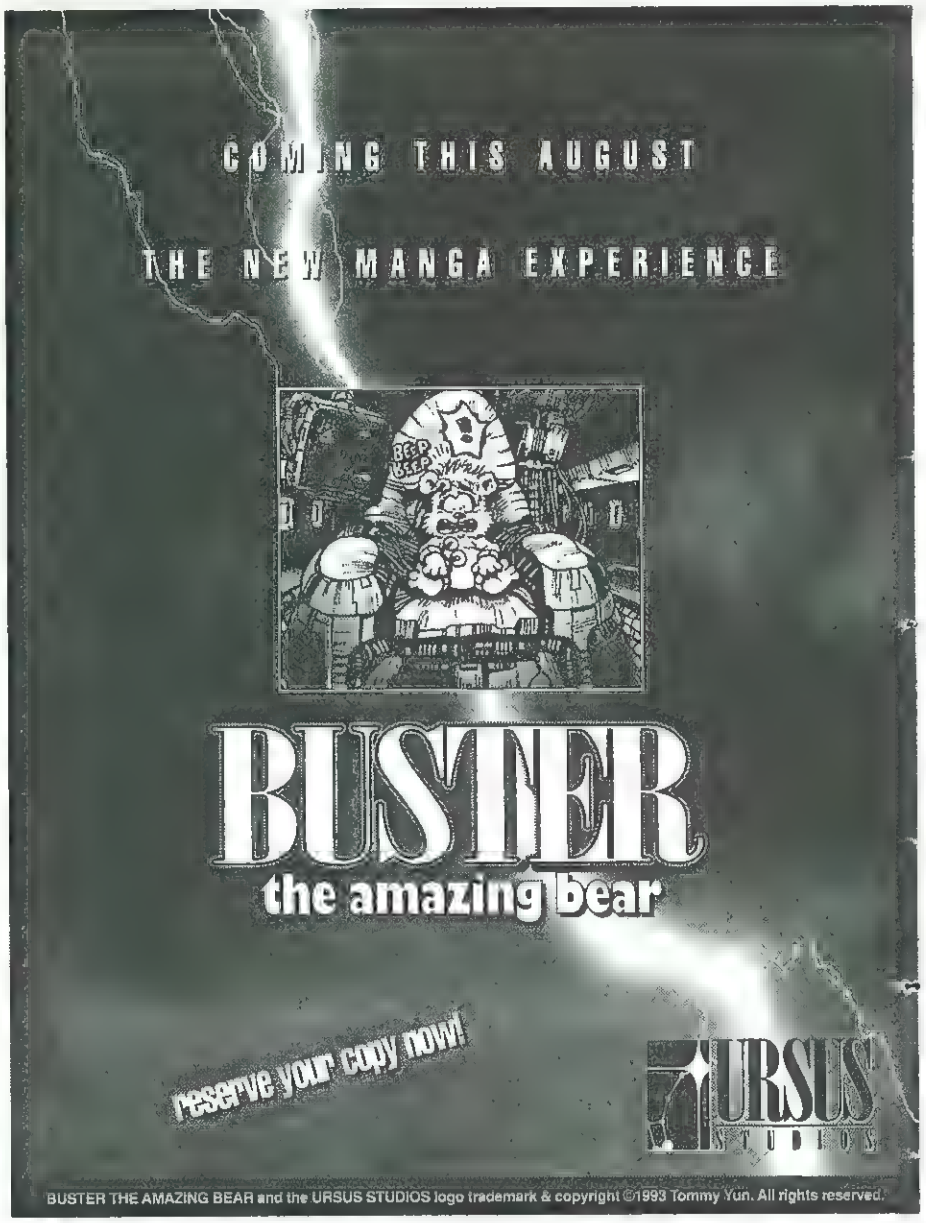
We started thinking about how to do this, and we came up with this plan where we start with our ***Unity*** and then we bring things back into the real world and focus, then build to an even bigger crescendo. We'll probably do a really big crossover-type event down the road—I'm not sure it's going to be the same kind of crossover that everybody else does—maybe we'll do that a year from August. A lot of things will become more clear; the events will unfold in the first year.

You seem really concerned that your readers really enjoy the Defiant books.

You remember ***Fantastic Four Annual #1?*** That forty-something-page story? I'd never seen anything like that before in my life! It was incredible; I just loved it. That's what I want to do with our Specials, and with our books. That's what I mean when I say cutting-edge. You remember back in the days when you went and bought your Marvel Comics, and every time you bought one, they did something that people said you couldn't do? They did something that was as if they'd come and asked me what they should do and I'd told them. I'd read a book and I'd say, "Wouldn't it be great if Spider-Man would turn up in the Fantastic Four?" and there he was in the next issue. I'd think, "The Thing is so strong—I wonder what the Hulk would do against the Thing?" and I'd pick up the next issue and there he is! It was like they were reading my mind; I want to do the same thing for our readers.

I got a letter the first time Solar turned up in ***Magnus;*** it was from one of the guys who wrote ***Solar*** way back when. He said, "You know, I always wanted to do that." It was totally cool; I felt great. That's what we want to do; that's the kind of attitude that's around here. You look at these people and you say "Claremont, Barr, Ditko, Weiss... that's quite a group!"

I'm sure that the incredibly strong response to the Plasm Zero Trading Card series had to make you happy.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I'm very, *very* pleased with the initial response. The trading cards and binders are a licensed product; it's not really Defiant, even though we created it and it's our work. I think that the River Group had no idea, though, of what the response would be. When they came up with this card set, they weren't going to do an album. I didn't understand the card business, so I said, "How do you create the album that they go in?" They looked at me funny, so I said, "Don't you make a special album for the set?" They said, "No—but maybe we should!"

The next thing you know, they'd agreed to it, and they said that they'd let people mail in for the album... and I said "No! You put it out for sale, just like the cards!" They went along with it; then they asked me how many they should make, and I picked a number—fifteen thousand. They said, "No way, it'll never happen." So they took orders, and they got orders for seventy-five thousand binders! I feel funny, because this isn't really my call since it's a licensed product—but I don't want people not to get it, and I don't want to do anything to bother people who ordered it thinking it would be a limited edition. I think their solution of doing a 15,000 copy first printing and a second printing is a reasonable solution. This has never been done before, so no one knew what to expect.

It's really a problem of unimaginable success; the thing sold so well that we're amazed by the response. Now I can't wait to see the numbers for ***Plasm #1***... I think that it deserves all the attention. David Lapham gets better all the time; ***Plasm #1*** makes the card set look old by comparison—he just gets better and better with each and every book. The inking by Mike Witherby is great, too... and the writer did okay, I guess...

Valiant became famous for its bonuses—trading cards, zero issues, coupon mail-ins, etc. Will you be doing more of that at Defiant?

We're going to do a lot of bonuses like I did at Valiant, but I can't say exactly what they are yet. With ***Plasm,*** we're doing a fifth color on the cover; we felt that it made sense editorially. That's really the key; when we do something like that, it's going to have a reason; we're not going to do this to spike up the sales by putting a hologram on the cover. If there's a hologram, it's because we felt that the story needed one.

One thing I learned is that people hate cutting coupons. I don't care if you have twelve copies—taking a pair of scissors to one of them is traumatic. I remember when I was a kid and I wanted to join the MMMS, I had to pick up a copy of ***Sgt. Fury*** so that I could cut a book up without feeling bad about it. Even then I didn't like to do it; like a dummy, I didn't realize that I could have just copied the information on a piece of paper. That lesson has been demonstrated to me pretty clearly, though; people are not fond of the coupon idea.

Do you think it's difficult to launch a new line with all the other new universes being launched this summer?

I wouldn't lightly dismiss this concern, but I don't really see it as as big a problem as some think. I think there's plenty of room in the market for good books; I think there's no room for more mediocre books. You've got Dark Horse and Malibu and Topps and Continuity and whoever else—and I have a feeling that the people who deliver the goods are going to win. I feel that the publishers with a lot of mediocre titles are going to take a hit. Let's come out with our stuff and see what the people think; any entertainer who doesn't want to take that challenge is in the wrong business.

Is Defiant primarily a character-driven line, or is there a creator-driven emphasis as well?

I think it's perfectly possible that star creators can do books for us; if we have a guy with that kind of talent and that desire, we help him. Part of helping him is helping him to work in a context; if he really wants to do his own thing and be left all alone, fine—he's Frank Miller doing ***Sin City***, and there's certainly not a thing wrong with that! Assuming that he wanted to work within the universe and gather all the benefits that come from working within a universe, then my goal is to help him.

I've heard the argument, "What's more important: the characters and the universe, or the star creators?" To me, the entertainment is what we're here to give folks; I don't think those other things necessarily have to be separate. The better people we work with, the better entertainment we offer. I think that character-creator debate is silly; anyone who denies the impact that Todd McFarlane had on ***Spider-Man*** wasn't looking, but anyone who doesn't think that the fact that it was Spider-Man got Todd some attention just came from Mars. If you have your head on right, you try to get the best possible talent to work on your books to provide the best possible entertainment—and make sure that the guy doing it has enough vested interest in its success that he feels like he has to run off and do something else.

Is it possible that, down the line, we'll see Defiant books that don't tie in with the Defiant Universe?

Absolutely. I followed the same procedure at Marvel. The first thing I did when I arrived there was straighten out the Marvel Universe; it

was in a mess, the books were always late, and things had slipped a little. First I got that house in order, then we did Epic Illustrated... We were the first major publisher to do creator-owned material on a regular basis, then the graphic novels, then Epic Comics... I wanted to do it, I wanted to do cutting-edge stuff.

Sometimes I'm accused falsely of wanting to do just one thing... No, I'm the guy who hired Bill Sienkiewicz, I'm the guy who talked Archie Goodwin into doing ***Moonshadow,*** etc. I *love* that stuff—but you have to get your house in order first, build your base, then you can have fun and hire people like Sienkiewicz to do entirely weird stuff. We kept trying to expand the envelope; we were the major publisher that pushed in that direction, then DC started really competing with us with ***Dark Knight*** and other innovations. At around this time, some of the little companies were growing and becoming threats and introducing innovations of their own; it was a level playing field, and everyone was taking their swing. Boy, that's great—give me that, that's what I want, a fair chance.

Will Defiant be expanding into graphic novels and other special projects?

Well, we have this sixty-four-page story by Len Wein that's essentially a graphic novel; we don't have any plans to do this on a regular basis, like one every six issues, but we're going to do this whenever it's appropriate. This was timed to a point in the story where it fit in. I'll tell you the title of it: the title is "Home For Christmas." There was an editorial reason for it, so we're doing it.

When I first conceived of ***Plasm,*** it was going to be a four-issue series for Image. When we started Defiant, we wanted to make it an ongoing monthly series; we had to make an adaptation from a closed-ended format to an ongoing format, and it required this story. The story sort of sprang full-blown; David and I both knew what we had to accomplish, so we've had this virtually from the moment we decided to be Defiant. It's just the right kind of story for Len Wein. That's the first special book; there'll be other ones, but they won't be appearing every six months like clockwork or anything like that. We're going to do it when it's great or when it's special; we're never going to sit around saying, "Oh, God, there's an annual coming out; we've got to come up with something."

I feel that you have an unwritten contract with your reader; he's expecting that book to show up when it's supposed to show up, and to me that's as sacred as your obligation to produce a good story and great artwork. If you're selling tickets to be on stage at Carnegie Hall, you'd better be there!... We take it very seriously. That's another advantage to working with the "old jaded husks" that I'm working with: they're all pros. Chris Claremont didn't miss an issue of ***X-Men*** for seventeen years; that's pretty good—and it *is* the record. That's important to me.

Last Week *CSN* featured reviews of *Batman/Grendel, Razorline, the Malibu Ultraverse, Jonah Hex: Two Fisted Mojo* and *Dark Horse Comics Greatest World.*

Next Week *CSN* will feature the complete July Checklist.

COMIC SHOP NEWS

MISS A WEEK AND YOU MISS A LOT!

Have you seen anything in this issue of ***Comic Shop News*** that you can't live without? Make sure you don't miss it; clip this handy coupon and write down the things that you want your comics shop owner to be sure to get for you!

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I gotta have 'em! Please reserve for me the following items mentioned in ***Comic Shop News!***

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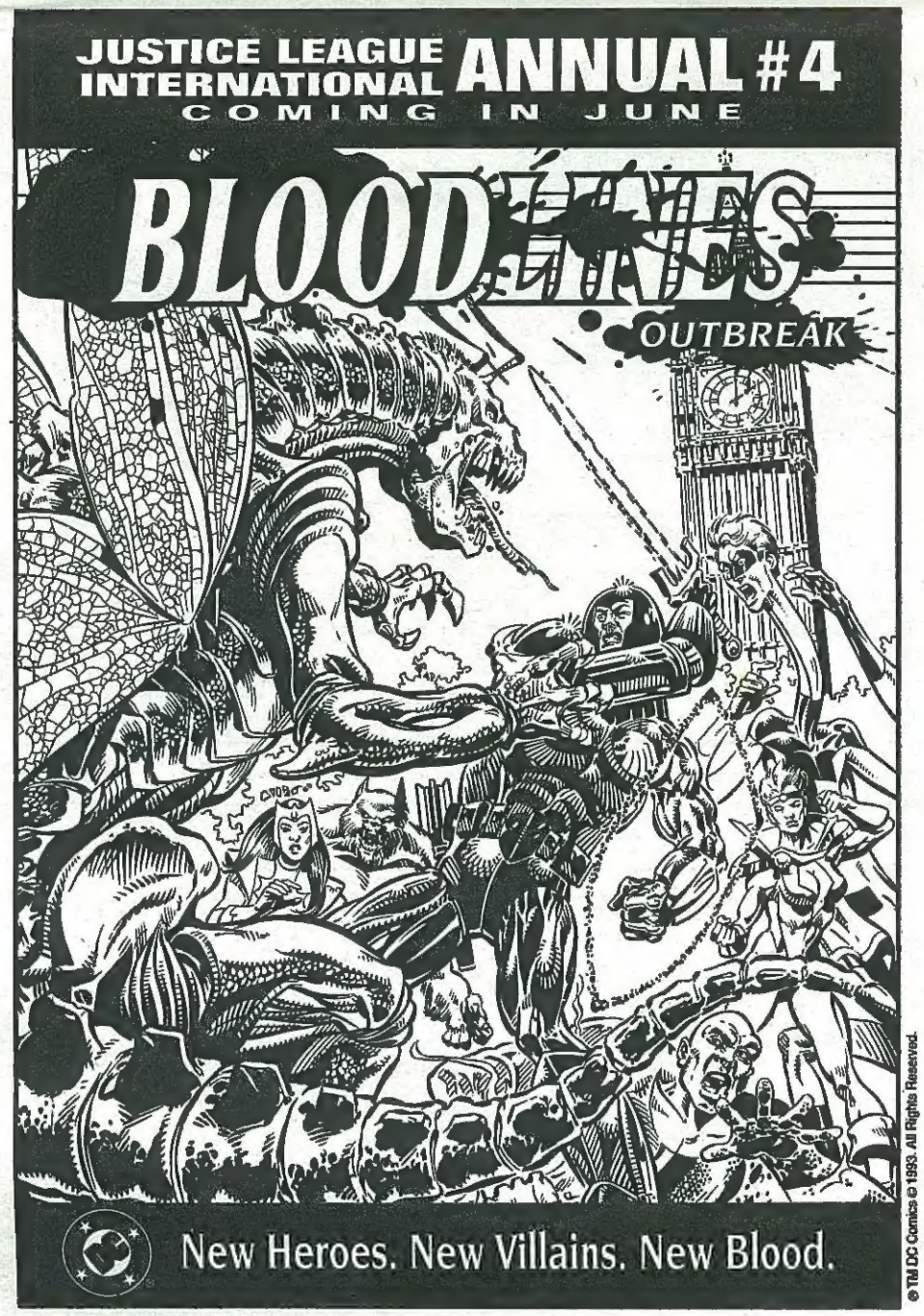
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DARK HORSE COMICS

JULY 6, 1993

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This mysterious "Monster" fellow we've been hearing so much about — is he a rumor or a fact? And is he a *he*, for that matter? Anyhow, we've unanimously appointed him "Worst Dressed" for 1993 (a phenomenal decision, considering that none of us were sure he even *wears* clothes).

-Bambi Marie Rolland, Society Page, ***Daily Arcadian***

MARVEL HOT PICKS

DAREDEVIL #321!

DD hits the racks with a glow-in-the-dark cover in part 2 of "Fall from Grace!"

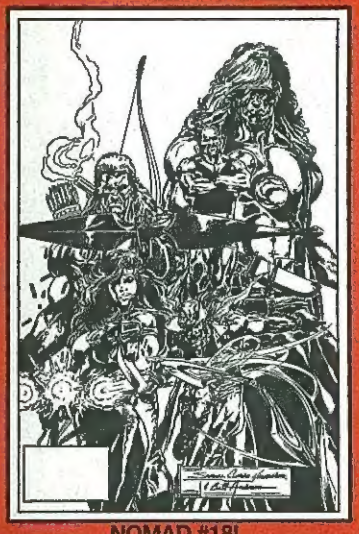
Saint Sinner™ & © 1993 Clive Barker

SAINT SINNER #1!

Clive Barker's newest super hero title from the RAZORLINE imprint premieres with a prismatic foil cover!

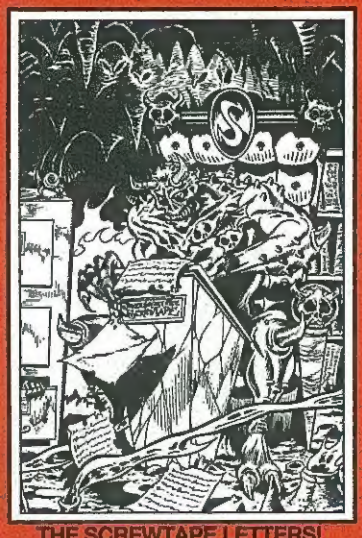
THUNDERSTRIKE #1!

Eric Masterson's return is celebrated with a 48-page issue, featuring a lightning-patterned holo-grafx foil cover!



NOMAD #18!

This issue kicks off the "Faustus Affair," in which Nomad is brainwashed into leading an army of Super Soldiers Assassins!



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C.S. Lewis' masterpiece, The Screwtape Letters, is adapted in a remarkable 96-page trade paperback!

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This polybagged, 64-page sensation introduces Legacy with an exclusive trading card!

MARVEL® COMICS

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